



The Horse That Leaps Through Clouds: A Tale of Espionage, the Silk Road, and the Rise of Modern China

Eric Enno Tamm

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On July 6, 1906, Baron Gustaf Mannerheim boarded the midnight train from St. Petersburg, charged by Tsar Nicholas II to secretly collect intelligence on the Qing Dynasty's sweeping reforms that were radically transforming China. One of the last Tsarist secret agents, Mannerheim chronicled almost every facet of China's modernization, from education reform and foreign investment to Tibet's struggle for independence.

On July 6, 2006, writer Eric Enno Tamm boards that same train, intent on following in Mannerheim's footsteps. Initially banned from China, Tamm devises a cover and retraces Mannerheim's route across the Silk Road, discovering both eerie similarities and seismic differences between the Middle Kingdoms of a century ago and today.

Along the way, Tamm offers piercing insights into China's past that raise troubling questions about its future. Can the Communist Party truly open China to the outside world yet keep Western ideas such as democracy and freedom at bay, just as Qing officials mistakenly believed? What can reform during the late Qing Dynasty teach us about the spectacular transformation of China today? As Confucius once wrote, "Study the past if you would divine the future," and that is precisely what Tamm does in *The Horse That Leaps Through Clouds*.

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